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Aide-memoire from the Soviet Government to the Government of the United States of America, dated 16 February 1966

According to official statements of the United States Government and reports in the Press, a United States B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons crashed on 17 January 1966 over the Spanish coast. As a result of this accident, four hydrogen bombs, each of them a hundred times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, fell on Spanish territory and the coastal waters of the Mediterranean Sea. The detonator of at least one of these bombs exploded, and radioactive substances were released. There is a danger of radioactive contamination also from the other hydrogen bomb, which is lying at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea. A large and densely populated area is threatened with radioactive contamination. Naturally, the peoples are profoundly perturbed by all these facts.

The Soviet Government draws attention to the fact that the activities which have resulted in the aforesaid events are at variance with the generally accepted principles and standards of international law and with those obligations which the United States Government has assumed under international treaties and agreements in force, and, in particular, under the 1963 Moscow Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water. As is well known, the principal aim of that Treaty was to prevent the radioactive contamination of the atmosphere, of outer space and of the waters of our planet. Accordingly, the parties to the Moscow Treaty, including the United States, declared their determination "to put an end to the contamination of man's environment by radioactive substances". Yet the southern coast of Spain, and also the adjacent maritime waters, have now been exposed to radioactive contamination from United States nuclear weapons.

The contamination of the sea cannot be confined to Spanish coastal waters, which are not isolated from the waters of the high seas. A very real threat of contamination of the high seas has been created, which is contrary to the principle governing the high seas long since established in international relations. Thus the 1958 Convention of the High Seas, signed and ratified by the United States, which requires each State to take measures "for the prevention of pollution of the seas or air space above, resulting from any activities with radioactive materials or other harmful agents", has been violated. How did all this come about? It may be said to have been a mine accident. But it is permissible to put the question: What kind of policy is this, what kind of activities of the military authorities are these, which lead to such dangerous accidents? It is enough to put this question to perceive that the practice itself of flights by United States aircraft carrying nuclear weapons over the territory of other countries and over the high seas involves the possibility of such consequences. No one can guarantee that if such flights continue, similar consequences can be excluded in the future.

United States Government officials have themselves repeatedly referred to the danger of a war breaking out as a result of miscalculation or an incident; yet the flights of United States bombers with nuclear weapons on board involve the danger of precisely such a situation.

The Soviet Government has repeatedly warned the United States Government of the dangers connected with the flights of bombers carrying nuclear weapons. The United States Government, however, has not heeded these warnings, and the flights of United States aircraft continue as before. What happened over Spain shows how well-founded were the warnings given by the Soviet Union.

What must be done in order to preclude any possibility of a repetition of such dangerous incidents?

It is quite clear that for this purpose it is necessary to put an end to flights by aircraft with nuclear and hydrogen bombs beyond the limits of national borders. These flights are a danger above all for the peoples of those countries whose governments permit the United States to use their air space for such purposes, countries which are enmeshed in the trammels of military obligations towards the

United States. In addition, the activities of the United States create a threat to the safety also of the peoples of other countries. The fact that some governments are prepared to reconcile themselves to such flights does not alter the situation in the slightest. It is inadmissible that the safety of many peoples, not to mention the peoples of their own countries, should depend on certain governments that give their consent to such flights.

In drawing the United States Government's attention to all the foregoing, the Soviet Government considers that the immediate discontinuance of flights by aircraft carrying nuclear weapons beyond the limits of national borders and the strict observance of the international agreements prohibiting the radioactive contamination of man's environment answer to the interests of the prevention of dangerous accidents and incidents likely to involve grave consequences for peoples, and to the interests of peace.